

ABC NIGHTLINE
1 September 1983

KOPPEL: Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel, and this is Nightline Press Secretary): (at press conference) Words can scarcely this horrifying act of violence.

KOPPEL: Tonight, the United States is still waiting for the why it shot down a Korean jetliner with 269 people on board. tonight, we'll talk to a broad range of specialists on intern Soviet Union, its air defenses, and on international intellig happened, how it happened, and what's likely next.

KOPPEL: If you were watching this broadcast last night, you with the same impression we did: there had been some kind of fighter jets and a Korean Air Line 747, but senior U.S. offic and we led you to believe, that the plane had landed safely o Sadly, that was not true. The U.S. flag over the White House today, and over all federal installations and all official U.S. buildings around the world, flies at half staff. Two hundred sixty-nine passengers and crewmen aboard Korean Air Line's Flight 007 are missing and believed dead. The aircraft was shot down by a Soviet air-to-missile, air-to-air missile. The United States and South Korean have called for a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council tomorrow. Tomorrow, also, President Reagan cuts short his vacation and returns from California to Washington. He'll meet with his top security advisers and with congressional leaders tomorrow and over the weekend. From the president to the Congress to the families of those who were on board the downed jetliner, the reaction today was one of almost sickening shock. Some found it hard to believe that the Soviets had actually shot down an unarmed plane with so many passengers on board. Many who spoke of the incident were deeply moved with pain and with anger.

* * * * *

KOPPEL: So far, at least, the Soviet government has acknowledged only that an airliner, an unidentified one, penetrated Soviet air space. They have not admitted shooting down the plane. Nor have the come close to expressing anything approaching regret. Joining us now live is the U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, Lawrence Eagleburger. Secretary Eagleburger, what do we know? Are we confident that the Soviet Union shot that plane down? EAGLEBURGER: Well, I think, Ted, the facts are absolutely clear. There is no doubt whatsoever, on the basis of evidence from a number of sources, that the Soviet air force shot down that Korean Airlines airplane. There's no doubt about that whatsoever.

KOPPEL: Give us, if you can, a thumbnail sketch of, of what happened to the best of the U.S. government's understanding and in what kind of a timeframe. EAGLEBURGER: Well, the time frame is, without the facts right in front of me is gonna be a little bit difficult, Ted.

KOPPEL: Roughly. EAGLEBURGER: But in effect, as the secretary said in his statement today, there is no question that the Korean Airlines plane was outside of its normal flight pattern and in fact over-flew Soviet territory. There is also no question about the fact that that plane was captured by Soviet radar for about two and a half hours. There were, at one time or another, eight Soviet aircraft up in the air, either looking for it or in fact later, unfortunately, finding it. There's no question at all about the fact that one Soviet aircraft, the one that in fact finally shot the plane, down came to within two kilometers of the Korean aircraft.

CONTINUED